The Changing Face of Higher Education: Northern Virginia Community College and the Corporatization of Higher Education

Charles T. Evans, May 2019

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INTRODUCTION

I've decided to write down some comments about the changes that I have seen in my twenty-five years of teaching at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA). The college has six campuses located in the Virginia suburbs of the Washington DC metro region,[1] and it also happens to be one of the largest community colleges in the country.[2] Some things that have changed I can quantify, such as changes in the number of faculty or administrators, but others are harder to assess such as the changing atmosphere of collegiality or increasing paperwork and committee demands. Drawing conclusions is even harder.[3]

I'd like to start with first summarizing "what we have more of" at the college. I'm going to go through some statistics that will help me to understand why things have changed as much as they have. I'll also have some comments as I look at the data. Then I'll cover the following categories:

- we also have more off these items too
- what is more complicated
- what is less complicated
- what else has changed at the college
- The one thing that we clearly seem to have less of is money from the state.

Then I'll have some overall comments and conclusions at the end. While the changes undergone by NOVA over the past twenty-five years are in many ways unique and tied to the growth and socio-economic dynamics of the region, I expect that much of what I describe here will also resemble the experience of faculty at other community colleges.

[1] Over the past twenty-five years, population in this area has grown rapidly. (Fairfax county, 2000 - .974 million, 2017 – 1.14 million; Loudoun county, 2000 – 173,000, 2017 – 398,000) That's an increase of 17% in Fairfax and 130% in Loudoun. Keep that in mind as we look at the enrollment increase at the college over that time span. These are also some of the wealthiest counties in the country, and actually two of the top five wealthiest counties in the country are here (Fairfax county 2017 median income - $113,208; Loudoun county 2017 median income, $115,574).

[2] Different sources usually rank NOVA as one of the three largest community colleges in the country. See, for example, https://www.campusexplorer.com/college-advice-tips/E8748B21/10-Biggest-Community-Colleges/.

[3] In writing up this article I'd like to thank Bev Blois, Arnold Bradford, Robert Brown, Meena Nayak, Bridget Pool and others for some of their thoughts and comments.

1. WHAT WE HAVE MORE OF AT THE COLLEGE.

It is pretty clear that we have more students than two decades ago.[4]
1996-97 student headcount[5] - 59,297
2016-17 student headcount - 74,283
That's an increase in headcount of 25% over twenty years.[6]
But let's also look at FTE figures.[7]

1996-97 = 20,798
2016-17 annual FTES = 32,689

That makes an increase in FTE of 57% over twenty years! And that means that while the college has more students than it used to, it also has more students taking a lot more credits, i.e., we are scheduling more courses. I'll come back that point later.

To keep up with that student enrollment growth, the number of full-time faculty has increased.
1997 number of full-time teaching faculty – 489
2017 number of full-time teaching faculty – 656
That's an increase of 34%.

It seems that we have kind of kept up with enrollment but that does not really match up with the increase in the total number of classes being offered (wish I had stats for that). As I just pointed out, we have more students, and they are all taking more classes. The college has met a lot of that increased demand for classes by adding adjuncts instructors (discussed next). Another factor that helps to explain the increase in faculty was the opening of a new Medical campus, which required additional staff and full-time faculty.

Digging around in the college's fact book, I found it interesting that in 1996-97, full-time (9-month faculty) accounted for 25.95% of the college's operating expenditures, while in 2016-17, that figure was only 14.6%. We're spending proportionately a lot less on full-

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[4] All data derived from the fact books published by the college's Office of Instructional Effectiveness (OIR).

[5] Unduplicated annual headcount (student is counted one time for academic year - Summer, Fall, and Spring)

[6] Note that enrollment has actually been trending down since 2012. If we use the headcount figure of 78,635 for 2012, then the percentage increase up to 2012 is 33%. But that also means that since 2012, our headcount enrollment has decreased about 5%. This is in line with national trends which indicate about a 6% average decline in enrollment in the past few years. See https://www.statista.com/statistics/236467/enrollment-in-us-2-year-postsecondary-institutions-by-institution-type/.

[7] Annualized FTES (Summer FTES plus Fall FTES plus Spring FTES divided by 2). Generally, FTE is a **Error! Main Document Only.**"measurement equal to one student enrolled full time for one academic year" and is often calculated for a semester by dividing the number of credits enrolled by 15.0 for each student.

time faculty at the college. The relevant figures for adjunct faculty are 15.02% and 9.9&.[8]

The number of adjunct faculty has also increased.
1997 adjunct faculty – 845
2008 adjunct faculty – 2008
That's an increase of 137%.[9]

There are a lot more adjuncts at the college, and many of my colleagues have felt that we are probably using too many adjuncts, but adjuncts are inexpensive. And as the college has grown in size, and state funding has lagged, it has been easy an option to rely on adjunct instructors to teach more courses.

Many adjunct instructors are great and work very hard in their courses, but at the same time it is difficult to maintain overall course content with so many adjunct instructors and also to ensure rigorous academic standards. The latter is not an easy thing to, but I tried. I decided to look at some general grading statistics from fall 2015 for our HIS 101 classes at the campus and online. I'm counting grades of A, B, C as student success.

Full-time instructors, campus courses
304/441 = 68.9%
Adjunct instructors, campus courses
280/433 = 64.6%
Full-time instructors, online courses
54/87 = 62.1%
Adjunct instructors, online courses
214/326 = 65.6%

Are there any meaningful conclusions from that data? Not sure, but I've watched grades in this HIS 101 course for many years. It is very typical that the online success stats are about 5 percentage points lower than campus. It is also usual that adjunct student success is about 4-5 points higher than that of full-time instructors. That is not, however, reflected in these numbers.

It is also clear that we're using far more adjunct instructors for the online courses. I'll say something about that later.

We were always told that the college was supposed to be, at a minimum, 60% full-time, 40% adjunct. But it was never exactly clear what that meant, or how that was measured, or even if it was measured. Was it measured by number of classes taught by adjunct

[8] Fact Book Table 3.2 Percent of Maintenance and Operations Expenditures by Line Item

[9] While the number of adjuncts has increased, it is not always clear if that means that adjuncts are actually teaching more students. For example, let's look at the example of HIS 101 enrollments for Fall 2017 in my campus and online courses.
HIS 101 - 23 campus sections (11 taught by full time); that's 904 students (471 taught by full-time).
HIS 101 - 19 online sections (4 taught by full time); that's 607 students (126 taught by full-time).

instructors v. number of classes taught by full-time instructors? Was it the number of students taught by full-time instructors v. the number taught by adjuncts? Or was it simply the number of full-time v. the number of adjuncts?

Let's just take a look at some numbers from a few years ago for our HIS survey classes at the Loudoun campus (History of Western Civilization 101-02, History of World Civilization 111-12, U.S. History 121-22), campus, online and dual enrollment, fall 2015.

Not Including dual enrollment instructors			
Full-time instructors:	7		
Adjunct instructors:	26		
Classes taught by full-time instructors:		33	
Classes taught by adjuncts:		41	
Students taught by full-time instructors:			1,053
Students taught by adjunct instructors:			1,337
Including dual enrollment instructors			
Full-time instructors:	7		
Adjunct instructors (6 dual enrollment):	32		
Classes taught by full-time instructors:		33	
Classes taught by adjuncts (14 dual enrollment)		55	
Students taught by full-time instructors:			1,053
Students taught by adjunct instructors (315 dual enrollment):			1,652

Let's look more closely at this set of data. Clearly there are far more adjunct instructors than full-time, not even close to the 40-60 ratio. There are also a lot more classes being taught by adjunct instructors. That ratio comes to 62.5-37.5. (Basically, the inverse of what it should be.) Finally, when it comes to students taught, the ratio is 61-39, again pretty much the exact reverse of what it should be.[10]

The increasing use of adjunct instructors presents some troubling trends. Adjuncts do not have much involvement in the other required and voluntary activities at the college besides showing up to teach. They generally do not sit on committees; nor are they involved in scheduling or other discipline activities. Basically, they have very little voice at the college, and, of course they have no job security as they can be hired and fired pretty easily.

Further, from the college's point-of-view, it is generally cheaper to employ adjuncts. Let's do some off-the-cuff figuring. If we have a class of 15 students @ $550 cost for the 3-credit course, then that equals $8,250 in tuition. The college can hire an adjunct at $2,500. That leaves room for a nice "profit" margin. Yes, this is a gross oversimplification as there are a lot of other cost factors at work, but the basic fact is that there is room to be on the plus size of the money ledger by using adjuncts.

[10] As an aside here, the only reason that the ratio is this close when it comes to students being taught is that full-time faculty tend to teach larger classes than adjunct faculty.

As a colleague has remarked to me, the increasing use of adjuncts "is a dangerous stat which puts the college on a collision course with becoming a more or less all-adjunct operation."[11]

The college staff has increased in size.
Classified staff has grown from 556 in 1997 to 866 in 2017, an increase of 56%.
The number of administrative faculty has increased from 69 in 1997 to 103 in 2017, an increase of 49%. (Administrative faculty include positions such as president, vice presidents, provosts, deans, and program coordinators.) It sure feels as though this number has increased far more than 49%.

Despite these increases, we still seem understaffed in many important areas, especially student service. For example, we have trouble keeping testing centers open as long as they really should be—we rarely have any Sunday hours, and Saturday hours vary greatly. On weekday evening we are often usually closed by 8 or 830 PM). Library hours also are short (usually no Sunday or Saturday hours, closed at 8 PM during the week), and computer centers usually have no Sunday hours. We also don't keep division offices or the counseling office open and available in the evenings during the week.

The administration has also increased in size.
In the 1996-97 college catalog, the collegewide administration is listed as consisting of: president, 2 deans (academic and administrative services), 3 associate deans, 9 directors, 6 coordinators (grants development; academic assessment, etc.) and the executive director of the college foundation. That's a total of 22 persons.

Compare that to the 2018-19 college catalog which identifies the collegewide administration as: president, executive vice president, 6 associate vice presidents, 5 vice presidents, 20 directors, 3 coordinators, controller, police chief, executive director of the college foundation, manager and a TBD. Now that's a total of 41 persons.[12] That's an increase of 86%.

But those figures are collegewide and don't include campus administration. Each campus now also has:

- one provost
- two divisions, each with a dean and 3 associate deans
- dean of students
- dean of student services
- registrar
- business manager
- etc.

[11] Private email.
[12] These figures do not include individual campus administrators, for example, provost, dean of students, business manager, division deans, etc. for the six campuses.

If we total that all together, then that makes of a lot of administrators in the college at present, and I've probably missed a bunch of them in trying to figure this out. It is generally thought that not many of these have advanced degrees in specific academic discipline degrees (as opposed to degrees in education, human resource or management fields), and fewer still remain active in the classroom. This leads to the often-heard complaint among faculty that the administration is out-of-touch with classroom issues.

Talking with colleagues, most also have the sense that the "administration seems too top headed" with "lots of vice presidents and associate vice presidents performing duties that I don't feel in touch with." This contributes to the feeling that the college has increasingly become a nameless bureaucracy, and when we look at the forms, the committees, the technology, the online training, the administrators, and processes such as registration, advising, etc., then wow.

So, we have a lot more administrators. That does cost money, but how much money is never really clear. I could look up a lot of salaries since they are subject to Freedom of Information regulations, and they are also published annually by the Richmond Times Dispatch.[13] But that would be complicated. We used to do some rough calculations. If we hired a new assistant vice president at $80,000, how many FTEs would we need to add to the college's enrollment to cover that salary cost? By a rough calculation, if tuition was $500 per three-credit course, then we'd have to add 160 course enrollments to cover that cost (each year). This assumes that the administrator is not teaching and bringing in any money to the college.

One last thought about administration. I've had many conversations with colleagues (and administrators) about the college administration. Two topics that always come up: (1) training and (2) evaluation. So, how much training does it take to be a college administrator? Faculty are always encouraged to undertake professional development, and there are routinely opportunities for faculty at the college, state and even national levels to improve teaching. Moreover, it is pretty much expected for faculty to undertake professional development, and that is reflected in the evaluation process. But we see no evidence of training for administrators nor activities designed to make them better at their work.

And that brings us to point 2, evaluation. Administrators and college staff are evaluated by their superiors, but it is nowhere near as comprehensive as the evaluation system that has been foisted upon faculty, and administrators do not undergo 360-degree evaluation. Faculty are evaluated by both students and supervisors (below and above). Administrators are evaluated from above, but they do not receive evaluative feedback from faculty (below) about the work that they are doing. I think that is a major problem at the college.

[13] The 2016 salaries are listed at http://data.richmond.com/salaries/2016/state/virginia-community-college-system.

And finally, one last point about administrators—they no longer teach. Years ago, all of the division deans taught, and some of the higher college officials. But over the years, it has become rare and rarer still for administrators to be in the classroom (even a little bit). Yes, they have a lot of meetings and paperwork but they lose a connection to the primary focus of the college, teaching.

There are also more counselors but probably still not enough.
Well, we do have more counseling for students, and we have both general and specialized counselors that focus on a wide range of problems (academic, transfer, occupation, financial, personal). Since we have more students, and since we have students with a wider variety of complicated issues, it is natural that we should have more counselors. In addition, as the number of students taking English as a Second Language (ESL) and developmental courses has increased, we have more counselors to help those students.

We also now have first-year advisers and pathway-to-the-baccalaureate advisers on each campus, and we recently added ADVANCE staff too. In theory that is great, but we seem to have a bit of trouble figuring out which student should go to which counselor. It also is completely unclear the exact relationship between faculty, counselors and advisers when it involves academic advising.

One of my colleagues added this: “I've always said there was one thing you could count on at the college... when student #s are rising, you get more counselors & when student #s are falling, you get more counselors.”

Tuition has increased at a far higher rate than inflation.[14]
Let’s look at some numbers.

Spring 1997, Virginia resident tuition of $48 per credit = $144 per 3-credit course
Spring 2003, Virginia resident tuition of $56.54 per credit = $169.62 per 3-credit course
Fall 2015, Virginia resident tuition of $171.25 per credit = $513.75 per 3-credit course
Fall 2018, Virginia resident tuition of $187 per credit = $561 per 3-cedit course

Using an online inflation calculator, the $144 for a course in 1997 is the equivalent of $228.06 in 2018. That tells us that the tuition increases of the past twenty years (289%) have far exceeded inflation rate and far exceeded the growth in student enrollment (25%).

This is because state funding for the community college system, indeed for all higher education, in Virginia has languished. This is not a situation unique to Virginia.

The rise in tuition has had several effects. For example, students are much more dependent on financial aid to pay for their tuition. We’ll look at those numbers later. Also, the increased cost of classes has helped to make students focus on core transfer courses (making us more of a transfer institution). We have dramatically reduced our

[14] Data from https://www.nvcc.edu/tuition/index.html and from the published semester schedule of classes from earlier years.

offerings of elective courses, and I think that the increased cost of a class is one contributing factor for that.

For more discussion of financial issues, see below.

Financial Aid for students has increased dramatically to become a large part of the operating income portion of the college's budget.[15]
2001-02, a total of $11,816,849 (grants, loans and work study)
2016-17, a total of $123,188,441 (grants, loans and work study)
That's an increase of 942%.

As a part of the college's operating income budget:[16]
2001-02, total budget of $125,063,233, and so financial aid was 9.44%.
2016-17, total budget of 319,426,527, and so financial aid was 38.6%.

These budget numbers are really complicated, but it's clear that since financial aid has become such a large part of the operating budget, then some other contributing entity (the state) has dramatically reduced its share of the college's budget. And I've noted elsewhere the increase in the tuition rate. I'll discuss this further below.

More students are taking online courses.
We've long had a distance learning option available to students at the college, first as correspondence courses and eventually transforming to all courses delivered online. There has been significant growth in the number of students enrolled.[17]

Fall 2007, unduplicated headcount at 6,392
Fall 2017, unduplicated headcount at 13,110. That's an increase in ten years of 105%, but that doesn't realty show the increase from the earlier correspondence course enrollments in the early 1990s.

I can give a more specific example of the online increase based on my own HIS 101-102 (History of Western Civilization) course sequence.

Fall 2007, 193 online students in 6 sections (On campus we had 387 students in 8 sections.)
Fall 2017, 749 online students in 25 sections (On campus we had 1,122 students in 30 sections.)
That's an increase in ten years of 288%. Of course, the increase in the number of students and sections has meant an increase in the number of instructors (mainly adjuncts) to teach those sections. In turn, that has meant supervision and coordination and training activities that have to be carried out.

Not only do we have more online students in more online courses, we also now have different lengths of courses (16-week, 12-week, 8-week, 6-week.) One thing that we

[15] NVCC Fact Book, Table 5.2 Student Financial Assistance by Award Category

[16] NVCC Fact Book, **Error! Main Document Only.**Table 3.4 Operating Funds Income

[17] NVCC Fact Book, Table ELI.1, Student Headcount and FTES

don't really have is any data to determine if there is a difference in instructional effectiveness dependent on the length of the course or on specific learning activities in a course.

I've already looked at the increasing use of adjunct instructors at the college, and here I'd just like to remind ourselves that we are using a lot of adjunct instructors to teach online courses, which are arguably the most difficult courses to design and teach effectively.[18] In fact, it is a widespread opinion among even fulltime faculty that teaching online is easy, not requiring much in terms of course design and continuing update, engagement with students, or even any work (just sit at home and watch the course management system go on autopilot). Nothing could be further from the truth.

Since we have more students taking online courses, we might inquire whether more students are actually being successful in their online courses. That's a really hard question to answer until we exactly define a success metric, and that leads us to a section of this paper that I've decided not to write, i.e., grade inflation. Faculty have been concerned about this throughout my twenty-five years at the college. It's been a constant issue!

So, let's just look at some very rough data that I've gathered on our HIS 101 courses in the past few years as part of the Achieving the Dream initiative. Let's see if more students are successful as student enrollment has changed in these years. Unfortunately, the earliest student success (grade) data that I have is for fall 2012 in our HIS 101 courses, both online and on campus.

Campus, 609 students
392/609 (A+B+C) = 64.3%
Online, 417 students
247/417 (A+B+C) = 59.2%

Let's compare that to similar statistics from fall 2018.
Campus, 815 students
542/815 (A+B+C) = 66.5%
Online, 489 students
284/489 (A+B+C) = 58.1%

Over the years, campus success has remained remarkably stable at about the same value of 64-65% with online students usually about 5% below that rate, in the range of 58-60%. There are, of course, substantial fluctuations from instructor to instructor and over different semesters.

We have a greater variety of course types for students.
At one time, a student had basically two options for courses at the college: 16-week on campus (day or evening) and 16-week correspondence (distance learning). Now, the campus courses can be offered as 16-week, 12-week, 10-week, 8-week or even 6-week

[18] See above section, "The number of adjunct faculty has also increased."

sessions. They can also be hybrid courses (half classroom, half online). The distance courses are all online with difference learning formats (mostly text-, audio-, or video-based or a combination of the three.) Like the campus courses, these can also be offered in 16-week, 12-week, 10-week, 8-week or 6-week sessions.

We also have dual-enrollment courses for high school students (covered in the next section) and a credit-for-prior learning option set up.

Yes, courses are offered in a far greater variety of formats and time options than twenty-five years ago. I guess that is done to match student availability, but one thing that we don't really have is clear data on how all of these options compare when it comes to the effectiveness of student learning.

Let me offer one other comment here about the courses on campus. Today, students are taking courses throughout the entire day, and that's easily explained by the increase in student enrollment. Twenty years ago, the campus pretty much shut down at 1 pm, and then there was a long break until evening classes started up at 7. Nothing happened in the afternoons. Very few courses were ever offered in those hours as there was no student demand for those time slots. That's no longer the case. We fill the afternoon class slots as much as we do the morning ones.

More students are enrolled in dual-enrollment courses in local high schools.
2010 headcount = 1,183
2016 headcount = 5,017
That's an increase of 324% in a very short time.

There's been rapid growth in the number of dual-enrollment (DE) students as this program spreads across the different school districts in our region. Because the college does have to deal with several school districts in different counties, this has made managing the program a bit more complicated. The increasing size of this program brings with it several complications as dual enrollment is a difficult tightrope to walk for us at the college and for high school teachers in the classroom.

From the college's point-of-view, instructors, who are not paid by the college but instead by the school district (and supervised by the school district), must be credentialled by the college and are expected to observe college faculty policies. The syllabi crafted by instructors must reflect all college requirements yet at the same time also follow school district requirements. For example, a school district might mandate that a course must have a specific number of graded assignments per quarter. So, while a syllabus for a dual enrollment class might be based on typical college requirements, for example, two papers and two exams in a semester (two quarters = one semester), that same class may also have to fit in the required high school assignments, for example, ten graded assignments per quarter (twenty per a semester). And as another example, while a college instructor can include extra credit opportunities in a course, Fairfax County Public Schools, one of the local school districts, prohibits extra credit in courses, and so which requirement takes precedence, the college or high school? Walking that line gets tricky, and that duality really only serves to diminish the integrity of the college course.

For high school teachers who are functioning as college instructors (and who are required to have the required credentials for that), as I've just mentioned, they have to juggle the two sets of regulations (college and high school) and yet not be paid as college instructors. They do not get paid "extra" by the school district or college for teaching a college course. They also have to teach the course in a high school classroom, which does not invoke the sensation of being at college.

And so, students, who currently pay little or no fee for the class, which is great, take the courses in high school rooms. They can earn college credit for the course, which is easily transferable throughout Virginia.

Let's just mention that the little or no tuition fee is great for students, but problematic for the college which depends on tuition and fees as an important part of the college's operating budget.

And in regard to the money issue, while the college is not receiving any direct tuition funding from students, which is important for the operating budget, the college does get credit for the FTEs generated through dual enrollment as part of state funding. But the college also has had to create staff to oversee the dual-enrollment program. That means a director (with salary) and faculty liaisons who get stipends or reassigned time for mentoring and working with all the high school instructors. We've already seen how college staff/admin has increased in size over time, and this is a clear example of how that works. When the college adds some new initiative, such as dual enrollment, that always results in an administrative increase (and hence budget increase).

Finally, a last complication of our dual enrollment program involves book selection. That can also be tricky as the instructor doesn't just assign books for students to purchase in the college bookstore (as is the usual practice for a college course). Instead, the instructor has to use the books that the school district has purchased since students don't purchase books in high school. That limitation can severely limit course objective and learning.

We are still working out the kinks of dual enrollment since we started this just a few years ago, but it is a program that has been mandated by the state (but not necessarily funded by the state). It is growing rapidly, and it seems that it is something here to stay.

The student body is far more diverse than it was twenty years ago, and it has changed in other significant ways.

More students are now full-time students.[19]
Fall 1997 fulltime 25.2%, part-time 74.8%
Fall 2017 fulltime 33.7%, part-time 66.3%

Students are younger.[20]
Fall 1997 median age of 26.6 (mean age 29.5)
Fall 2017 median age of 21 (mean age 24.5)

[19] NVCC Fact Book, Table 1.11 Full/part time status

[20] NVCC Fact Book, Table 1.4 Median and mean age

That indicates that fewer older adults are taking classes—and yes, that is clear in the classroom. Two contributing factors to explain that might be the large tuition increase that discourages adults from taking a few classes, or it may also be due to the increasing number of highly-educated residents in the area. The skewing younger of the college has coincided with a refocus of the college's priorities to become more of a transfer institution, which has led to the development of detailed articulation agreements with colleges for students who are going to transfer. But as we focus on becoming largely a transfer institution, that removes some of the course experimentation that students could previously do in the degree pathways. I'll talk about this later in regard to general education courses.

The percentage of female students has increased.[21]
Fall1997, male 48.5%, female 51.5%
Fall 2017, male 45.7%, female 54.3%

Finally, the student body is more diverse.[22]
Fall 1997, white 52%, African American, Asian, Hispanic and others 48%
Fall 2017, white 37.6%, African American, Asian, Hispanic and others 62.4%

There is a much more diverse ethnic background of our student body at the college today than twenty years ago. The increase in student population and diversity very much reflects the population changes of the area, and that student diversity makes for a far more interesting classroom. I don't really sense that the overall skill set of the students in the classroom has changed appreciably in twenty years. So, in the classroom, students are younger, more diverse and more likely to be attending NOVA with the intent to transfer to a four-year Virginia college.

I actually think that the diversity is a positive for the college. The classroom is now a mix of students from so many different backgrounds and nations. And while that can be challenging for an instructor, it can also be a rewarding experience.

Faculty/Student ratio
We've seen that student enrollment has increased over time, along with the number of full-time and adjunct faculty. But has the student/faculty ratio kept pace with that growth?

1996-96 student headcount - 59,297
2016-17 student headcount - 74,283
1997 number of full-time teaching faculty – 489
2017 number of full-time teaching faculty – 656

1996/97 ratio is 1:121
2016/17 ratio is 1:113

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[21] NVCC Fact Book, Table 1.6 Gender distribution

[22] NVCC Fact Book, Table 1.7 Race distribution

1997 number of full-time and adjunct faculty - 489+845 = 1,334
2017 number of full-time and adjunct faculty - 656+2008 = 2,664

1996/97 ratio is 44.45
2016/17 ratio is 27.88

This is a rather crude calculation here, but there has been some improvement in this ratio.

2. WE ALSO HAVE MORE OF THESE ITEMS TOO.

Committees

So, it is pretty clear to me that we have a lot more committee work taking place at the college today than twenty-five years ago, but how to prove that other than word of mouth. I took a look at the faculty handbook, since that lists official college standing committees.[23] From the 1999-2000 Academic Year Faculty Handbook,[24] there were 13 committees listed.[25] For the 2016-17 academic year, there are 23 listed.[26] That's an increase of 77%.

What I can't quantify from the handbook source is the number of ad hoc, temporary, campus or discipline committees, which, if included, would show an even greater increase in the number of committees.

Let's take a small example. The full-time historians of the college[27] always met as a group, formerly called a "cluster" now called a "faculty discipline group." The discipline now has a steering committee that is supposed to meet monthly, a student learning outcomes committee to work on testing procedures to measure student achievement in our history courses (We'll talk about this later.), and five representatives that sit on three different pathway councils (Social Science, General Education, and Liberal Arts)—more on these councils later.

And these committees connected to the history discipline have quite a bit of work to accomplish. The steering committee has to monitor our compliance with and fulfillment of the recommendations from our history discipline review, which is a requirement of

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[23] Section 2.50 of the faculty handbook covers collegewide, standing committees.

[24] https://web.archive.org/web/20000815223814/http://www.nv.cc.va.us:80/resources/fachandbook/ (http://www.nv.cc.va.us/resources/fachandbook/)

[25] Administrative Council, Affirmative Action Committee, Articulation Committee, Awards Committee, Budget Advisory Committee, College Planning Committee, Convocation Committee, Curriculum Committee, Hearing Committee Panel, Human Resource Development Committee, Student Financial Aid Committee, Instructional and Student Services Committee (Forum), Personnel Services (Forum)

[26] Instructional and Student Services Committee, Personnel Services Committee, Senate Steering Committee, Senate Elections and Credentials Committee, Senate Committee on Committees, Administrative Council, Academic Deans Council, Learning and Technology Resources Deans Council, General Education Council, Advisory Committee for College Safety and Security, Awards Committee, Budget Advisory Committee, College Emergency Management and Planning Committee, College Commencement Committee, Convocation Committee, Curriculum Committee, Environmental and Sustainability Action Committee, Faculty Hearing Panel, Global Studies Committee, Honors Committee, Information Technology Committee, Professional Development Committee, College Scholarship Committee

[27] Once 23, now 30+ fulltime faculty.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation.[28] The review was finished just two years ago, and yes, it was undertaken by a committee that took something like nine years to complete the work. The steering committee also has to deal with other history discipline issues that come up, such as credit for advance placement exams, course transfer and articulation agreements, degree requirements, etc. The history student learning outcomes (SLO) committee has the nightmare task of figuring out which discipline and general education goals and objectives to test in a single year, decide which courses need to be tested and then carry out the testing and scoring of the SLO testing. I'll tall more about SLOs later.

Forms

Well, we now have a "forms library" on the college website. Need I say more! I knew that we always had a lot of forms, but that "forms library" lists 152 forms for students and 242 forms for faculty. There is some overlap as some forms are applicable for both faculty and for students, but you get the general idea that there is a lot of paperwork. And even though all these forms are online, that does not mean that they can all be submitted online, nor does it mean that each form is easy to use and understand. So, on the one hand, doing forms online is easier than going from person to person to get everyone's approval for a course substitution request—and we also no longer have to review each student's graduation request (something that faculty advisers had to do) because that is done with an online form. On the other hand, many of the online forms are not intuitive or logically laid out and end up causing a lot of confusion.

Plus, not all college forms are included there in the library. There are others, secret ones, available only by special request, and in only a hard copy format, and there are also others required for special tasks, such as the faculty evaluation process, that don't appear in the library but that are readily available from campus offices.

The adjunct new hire packet now consists of forty-six pages of forms. Yes, many of these forms are driven by federal and state requirements, but it is just emblematic of how much has changed in the last two decades. So many forms! And that brings us to paperwork!

Paperwork

This has truly become a nightmare at the college as the paperwork requirements at the college have exploded. I've already just mentioned the forms library and committees, which generate paperwork, but there is more.

Every time that we come up for faculty contract renewal at the college, we are required to document all essential college activities that we have engaged in since the last contract renewal.[29] I've heard horror stories of some faculty being forced to compile, 75, 100, 125 pages to be submitted for evaluation. And, while this is technically the

[28] There are 10 recommendations and 10 suggestions attached to the report. Each recommendation/suggestion has a rationale and suggested action plan in the "History Discipline Evaluation Report, 2006-2016."

[29] This happens at five-, three- or one-year intervals, depending on overall length of service at the college.

same process across the college, it is pretty clear that it has been applied differently and unevenly across the college. Some deans are more exacting, others more pro forma, and I'm really not sure what dean wants to read all that paperwork. Plus, the process just shifted the workload from the administration (the dean) who is supposed to be doing the gathering of information and the evaluation of the faculty to the faculty, who already has better things to do than keep track of every meeting that he/she attends.

The faculty evaluation procedure was revised across the state and at the college a few years. Supposedly the goal was to make it clearer, easier and more efficient (and maybe allow for the removal of under-performing faculty, which never happens). The result has been the exact opposite. The process used to center on a one-page document form completed by the division chair who would write a paragraph or two about faculty job performance and activities. After reviewing the form, I could add something to the form if I wished. We (dean and faculty) usually met and talked this over for about thirty minutes. The form had boxes for ratings of excellent, very good, good, fair and unsatisfactory. It was maybe an hour all told, a relatively painless process. There was a caveat in the old process that you needed excellent or very good rating to qualify for promotion.[30]

Now we've got APPDOs as part of the evaluation process. Let me give you the official name for an APPDO: Annual Performance and Professional Development Objective. Each APPDO can be established in one of four fields: teaching, service, scholarly and creative engagement, institutional responsibilities. Wow, that sounds easy to assess, but it's the documentation required that piles up.

Each December, you need to fill out a form declaring each APPDO, i.e., each activity, that you will accomplish in the upcoming year in each of those fields. That means that you need at least 4 APPDOs. Then the following December you fill out a new form assessing whether you completed your APPDO (and you attach documentation). So, each December you are completing at least 8 forms (assessment of four old APPDOS and the proposal of at least four new APPDOs) plus attached documentation. You also have to keep track of all this so that you have it available for your faculty evaluation when that comes up in five, three or one years.

There is clearly a lot of time and paperwork now connected with faculty evaluation and APPDOS, and it is not surprising that there is a lot of paperwork connected with other college processes now. I've already mentioned dual enrollment, which is something that was not around 25 years ago. Someone at the college has to double-check instructor credentials, do a class visit (fill out form), mentor instructors (as necessary), verify syllabus compliance with NVCC syllabus requirements, evaluate the class. That's all paperwork.

Another way that you can tell that paperwork is involved is when you come across acronyms like APER or SLO. Let's glance at the APER (Annual Planning and

[30] Actually, I am not certain any more if it was just excellent or excellent/very good that was required for promotion.

Evaluation Report) first. It's hard for me even to explain it because the form is not intuitive nor are the requirements and the resulting paperwork. Let's take the example of the certificate program that I am involved with, the Public History and Historic Preservation career studies certificate (https://blogs.nvcc.edu/preserve/). The program has to establish student learning outcomes for students; then those SLOs have to be mapped into each course in the program so that we know which outcome is being achieved in each course. Then every year we have to (1) decide which outcome and which course will be assessed and what type of assessment measure will be used for that outcome in that course. In addition, at the same time, we need to (2) summarize the assessment results from last year. As we summarize those results, we also need to explain how those results will be used in the future. Technically, it's all supposed to be useful, but the amount of paperwork and the formality of the paperwork is so mind-numbing that it is hard to figure how to be useful. Of course, the college declares that this is all required for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

I've already introduced you to that infamous term, the SLO. Twenty-five years ago, we graded students in a course to indicate mastery of course material (we still do that), but somewhere along the way came the assessment movement to see if students were really learning what they were supposed to be learning. It didn't seem to be proof enough that if a student earned a C in a course, then that indicated that the student had learned some of the content in the course but had not mastered all of the content of a course. If the student received an F, then clearly the student had failed to master the learning goals and objectives of the course. That always seemed pretty straight-forward.

Now, each course at the college has specific goals and objectives that are supposed to be taught and learned—these appear on something called the official "course content summary". So, a grade of A reflects mastery of those goals and objectives.

But now there is more! We are required to establish discipline goals, for example, for history (even though we do not offer a history degree). These discipline goals are called student learning outcomes (SLOs). Here's an example of one that we no longer use: "Students will analyze the significance of historical events to the evolution of ideas, social and cultural structure, and economics within a global context." I'll add here that each of these SLOs often is written in a bit of jargon. Each year we are supposed to assess one of these history SLOs in a course, or in several courses. That means that a committee must develop some kind of test or quiz, distribute that test to instructors in different kinds of courses (8-week, 16-week, online, hybrid, adjunct instructor, full-time instructor, etc.), gather the results, grade the results, determine what the results mean and then decide if any action is needed. It is a one huge process that ensnares quite a few faculty members every year.

Globalism

I think that our curriculum is far more global oriented than it was twenty-five years ago, and I think that part of that is a result of recognition by the college that the diversity of

our students[31] (and our faculty) requires a more global orientation, and another part of the change is a result of new curricular requirements at our transfer institutions. We now even seem to have at the college an Office for Global Studies and Programs and have developed study abroad programs.

I can look at enrollment in my world history survey course sequence (HIS 111-112) for some evidence of the global direction at the college. When I began teaching twenty-five years ago, no historian at the college offered a world history course. The U.S. history survey course was by far the most popular history course sequence at the college, and that was because George Mason University (GMU) preferred the U.S. history courses for transfer. When GMU changed its curriculum and began to want the Western Civilization history courses, enrollment in US history plummeted and Western Civilization enrollment rose dramatically.

After 2000, we slowly began to offer world history courses at the college, and there has been slow growth since that point. In Fall 2018, I had 325 students enrolled in those courses (both online and on campus) in comparison to fall 2007 (earliest that I could find records of when I offered the courses), the total was 56. That's an increase of 480%.

Developmental and ESL education
This is such a complicated subject

First, we have far more ESL instructors (4) than we had twenty-five years ago (1). That's because we offer more ESL courses for students than we used to, and it is reflective of the population changes in our region and the overall growth of enrollment at the college.

Second, a lot of students are not qualified to take math courses at the college, because they have placed low on the math placement test. As a result, we have a lot of students taking math developmental courses as students increasingly arrive at the college unqualified to take the basic, required math courses. The math deficit is something that has become more common over the past two decades, and that's why we keep redesigning math courses.

Third, English developmental courses (now called English Foundations, ENF) have also been modified over the years. Changes in our placement testing has resulted in more students being placed directly into English composition courses and bypassing developmental education. The driving factor of this change (getting more students out of developmental courses) is that the developmental courses do not count towards a student's degree progress.

Fourth, because development courses do not qualify for degree progress, and thus they do not qualify for financial aid, this has kind of pushed the college and Virginia

[31] Table 6.1 International Students by Country/Location, fall 2017, shows 7,714 international students.

Community College System (VCCS) into a process of getting students through development as fast as possible so that they can start degree progress with credit-earning courses.

As a result, we have a lot of students that really do not have the skill sets for success in the classroom. Reading and writing skills vary wildly; speaking and math skills do too. It seems to me that twenty-five years ago the college had a pretty clear idea of how to bring those students up to college standards, and that process could take some time as students passed up the developmental scale. Now, because of financial aid regulations and pressure to show student progress, the college has dramatically eliminated or much shortened the developmental route.

One of my colleagues confirmed this suspicion of mine:[32]

> Before the VPT, our developmental classes were producing stronger students than what are being produced in the current ENF program. The ENF program doesn't allow for the developmental growth that is needed for students to develop their skills, but the VCCS wanted/needed to condense the number of credits students had to take that were development credits in order to speed up degree completion rates and in order to accommodate the newer financial aid restrictions on developmental credits. FA no longer covers classes that are not listed on a degree plan, and developmental classes are not part of those plans.
>
> As of fall 2018, many in-coming students are now being placed in ENG and ENF classes based on high school GPA and/or SAT test scores rather than on the VPT, which seems to be placing more students in ENG 111 and ENG 111/ENF 3. (This new placement procedure may show up as a decreased success rate in ENG 111 and ENG 111/ENF 3 once data is gathered and aggregated over the next couple of years.) The VPT is only used for certain situations now. Many non-native English speakers are also choosing to self-select that they are native English speakers on their admission form so they can avoid the lengthy ESL track of classes, and this new movement is also affecting ENG success rates. The VCCS philosophy seems to be to throw 'em in the deep in and let them sink or swim. For those of us in the English department, it is frustrating to say the least

Technology

The technology environment at the college, just like everywhere else in the known world, has undergone a remarkable transformation in the past twenty-five years. The “forms library” which I already mentioned above, is a clear example of how much more is now being accomplished via the web or online.

One area that has changed quite a lot is distance education. When I started teaching, our distance education offerings were basically correspondence courses. In our history courses, students received a detailed study guide that indicated what to read in the textbook and other books and information to prepare for the exams. Students mailed in assignments to a central place where faculty went to grade those assignments and to hold office hours. That central place was located in a renovated warehouse.

Eventually, we began to use television to support our distance courses. In my course, we had a subscription to Eugen Weber’s (1925-2007) lectures on the “Western

[32] Email exchange of 16-17 January 2019

Tradition," which were broadcast on the college TV station and which were then carried by local cable systems—this was very complicated because there were five or six different cable systems/channels involved with airing the programs. Students were supposed to watch the TV lectures. Those Weber lectures were supplemented by my own recorded lectures in which I stood in front of a blue curtain and talked.

Moving on from the video lectures, I next recorded audio lectures which were copied on cassette tapes and sent to students (or bought in the bookstore).

At some point in time, students began to have widespread access to the web, and the college adopted a course management system, Blackboard. At the first opportunity, I digitized all my audio lectures as mp3 files and uploaded them to the web. By this time, my course study guides were on the web, and soon all of my course materials appeared on the web as open educational resources (OERs). Finally, I began to record my own videos and put them on YouTube for students. Generally, it has been pretty seamless for me, but with a lot of work involved, as I transitioned from one tech to another.

Some other technology changes/milestones at the college:

- Faculty and students now all have web-based email. Seems almost commonplace now!
- Faculty and students now really no longer have web space at the college—being behind a firewall barrier does not really make web-based materials usable. (We had open access for about ten years.).
- As bad as our web-based student information system is—and it is not user-friendly—it is still much better than the old terminal access system in which only a select handful of people had access to the college information records. And the current SIS does allow for online registration by the students.
- And, of course, the entire state community college system uses Blackboard as its course management system. (That is changing now as we move to something called Canvas.)

But while technology is now a big part of life at the college, there are still problems that technology has not solved—it has not made many processes as user-friendly as they could be. For example, registration is a nightmare, and I'm not sure how any student gets signed up for the right courses. And it is not easy for a student to track his/her degree progress. Nothing is intuitive, and nothing is set up to prevent the student from making mistakes, like signing up for the wrong class. And as a faculty adviser, there are now several different advising systems that I am supposed to be aware of when I check on a student's degree progress. It is all far more confusing than it needs to be.

And with all that technology there comes a dark side: training requirements, Spam, denial-of-service attacks, hacking, security breaches, etc.

Traffic

There is more traffic; there is a lot more traffic, and I am not sure there is anything that

can be done about that, but traffic does impact the college. What was once a fifteen-minute drive to the campus is now at least a 25-30-minute ride, and there are no guarantees that something like an accident, roadwork, unidentified issue or inclement weather could make that an hour-long commute. Students, faculty, staff—we all deal with the traffic, and it is not pleasant.

Because of the traffic, my feeling is that there are fewer students taking courses at multiple campuses. It used to relatively common for students at Loudoun to also be taking a class at Annandale, but I just don't think that is the case anymore. Part of that is due to our increased course offerings at Loudoun, and part is due to the traffic.

Traffic is also partly a factor that has helped drive down faculty attendance at general college meetings and gatherings in August and January and even at the college commencement ceremony. Attendance at these college events has dropped off dramatically in the last ten years. Traffic is a factor, but there are also issues of morale and non-teaching workload.

Buildings

We have a lot more buildings at the college, and there is even a parking garage at the Annandale campus! Upkeep of buildings costs money, and that is another source of pressure on the budget. To take just the example of my campus, which is one of the college's six campuses, we had essentially one building in the early 1990s (plus two trailers). Now we have 6 buildings plus an associated off-campus center location. In that one building in the 1990s, we had about 12 classrooms, and some were miniscule, but that's all it took for daytime classes.

That meant that we ran quite a few off-campus classes in the evenings in diverse locations like local high schools. Those facilities were often not the best with basically no AV equipment most of the time. We no longer have any classes that I know of in any high schools (except dual enrollment classes). I wonder whether that is good or bad.

Over time, we've dramatically improved the campus classrooms. At some point in the later 1990s, we put computers in every classroom. One of my early grant applications was for funding to set up a "classroom of the future." That was in February 1997, and our purpose was (1) to upgrade current ability to provide instruction in the design and implementation of interactive multimedia programs in room 138 and (2) to expand the use of these multimedia machines to deliver and facilitate classroom instruction in all disciplines. This will allow the creation of a true "classroom-of-the-future." One of the essential arguments was that students must have "www access" in the classroom. That seems so long ago now!

So, the buildings have been a positive change at the college. No more classes at night in high schools. All of our classrooms are equipped with appropriate technology. They are clean and good looking. The place looks like a college now!

One effect of the increase in buildings has been to scatter faculty everywhere across the campus and college. When we were all in the same building--basically all faculty were on the same floor in the library--that tended to keep faculty and students close together and promoted collegiality.

3. WHAT IS MORE COMPLICATED!

I think that I could simply say that just about everything is more complicated at the college these days. And I've already touched on some items like paperwork, committees, evaluation, scheduling.

Transfer (and Pathways), a lot more complicated.
Not sure if this is better or worse, but twenty years ago, a student completed an associate degree (or didn't) and then applied to transfer to another university or college, usually in Virginia. That was a pretty-straight-forward process.

That is still often the case, but it can be a lot more complicated now because there are different "transfer" programs in place now. We have guaranteed admission agreements (with detailed fine print) to some schools, complicated articulation agreements to others, and we are now developing "pathways" to some Virginia colleges. These pathways are tailored to specific colleges and specific degree programs. For example, if a student wants to be a biology major at James Madison University (JMU), then there are specific courses to be taken at NOVA before transferring to JMU. That's the "pathway" from NOVA to JMU!

George Mason is a special case since so many of our students intend to transfer there, and you would think that would be a pretty simple process. Now there are several different ways for a student to get to GMU from NOVA: (1) something called ADVANCE, (2) a regular competitive transfer, (3) transfer through the guaranteed admission agreement, or (4) through the Pathway to the Baccalaureate program. All have slightly different requirements.

The transfer process and the development of the pathways are made more difficult by the fact that the universities and colleges all have different requirements for the same degree. For example, if a NOVA student intends to pursue a degree in psychology, the student will usually have to first meet the NOVA requirements to graduate with an A.S. degree. But then it gets tricky because George Mason, James Madison, VCU all have different requirements for the degree in psychology. The student has to be very careful to make sure that the courses taken at NOVA transfer directly as courses (not just as general electives) to the college of transfer. That means that we at NOVA have to have different pathways for the psych student, depending on which college he/she will attend. It is now so complicated—technology could simplify this, but it has yet to be implemented.

This transfer student advising and pathway creation makes it extremely complicated for faculty advising. And now we have "pathway councils" and "discipline groups" tasked with working out these issues. At a recent meeting of the college history faculty (a discipline group) we spoke in circles for almost two hours about pathway requirements (differences between A.S., A.A. and general studies), transfer electives, general education electives and other issues that we don't really have full control of because there is always someone in the administration making curricular decisions, like the removal of courses from the college catalog.

I've received great feedback from my colleagues at the college about transfers and pathways. One offered this excellent point.

> Coordination with senior institutions, while a good idea in theory, strips community colleges of their important function of serving their community's diverse needs. It's all about "pathways." Our institution becomes a transition mechanism between high school and the four-year degree places. It's a hallway, a feeding tube. It loses its own identity. And clearly, the senior institutions see no need to coordinate with each other, which would make some sense in terms of transferring credits.

So much of that has been accurate over the years. We've seen this at work in different ways, as I've discussed our decreasing ability to offer courses beyond the usual survey courses for transfer to four-year colleges. And NOVA also has to constantly respond and change our course offerings in reaction to what four-year schools, like George Mason University, want. There are countless examples of changing requirements over the years. For example, for years GMU wanted US history courses for transfer. Then that suddenly changed to a Western Civilization requirement, which dramatically changed what we could offer as U.S. history enrollments plummeted. In English, GMU always required ENG 112 (College Composition II), but then changed that to a preferred ENG 125 (Introduction to Literature), and now GMU is changing back to ENG 112. It has been a similar back-and-forth with our communication studies and theatre courses.

Now, of course, since we have no local, community funding sources for NOVA, it is not really all that unusual that we would not have close ties to the local community when it comes to making curricular changes.

Title IX, Clery and ADA Compliance

I can clearly say that while Title IX,[33] dating to 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),[34] dating to 1990, and the Clery Act,[35] also dating to 1990, have all been in existence since I began teaching at the college in 1991, there was pretty much no mention of any of these through the 1990s until maybe 2005. I was definitely aware of ADA since I was doing work on the web pretty early and recognized that there were

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[33] "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/1681

[34] "The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion." https://adata.org/learn-about-ada

[35] "The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act is a federal statute requiring colleges and universities participating in federal financial aid programs to maintain and disclose campus crime statistics and security information. The U.S. Department of Education conducts reviews to evaluate an institution's compliance with the Clery Act requirements." https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/about/data-center/school/clery-act-reports

ADA requirements for my work, but beyond that I don't ever recall coming across these compliance programs.

There is now clearly much effort being done at the college to ensure that we comply with the provisions of each of these federal acts. Compliance requires training programs for faculty/staff and data gathering/reporting operations. That means we have to have dedicated staff at the college to monitor/collect data and submit the required reports. It is an enormous paperwork challenge, and it is not cheap.

But wait, there is more when it comes to compliance. I'd note that all faculty and staff at the college have a series of other trainings that we have to do, for example, the state's Department of Human Resource Management requires annual training on topics like Alcohol and Other Drugs' Policy, Fundamentals of EOO Law (Equal Opportunity), Terrorism and Security Awareness Orientation. This is not really unusual because all state employees have to do these, but again, they were not around twenty-five years ago. Again, someone at the college has to monitor all this, and again, that costs money. I almost forgot, and how could I forget, our annual technology training, formerly known as MOAT—Managed, Ongoing, Awareness, Tools--and now called GLS—Global Learning Systems--Security Awareness Training. That also requires staff to monitor, and staff cost money.

And as I was browsing the college's website, I remembered that the college also has an environmental compliance officer ($$$). It is probably, actually a good thing that we have someone doing that. And we also have staff for COOP (Continuity of Operations Procedures)—if there is some sort of disaster, think earthquake for example, that interrupts the regular delivery of instruction, how are students going to be able to continue with their classes. That's "continuity of operations." This also requires staff, planning and money.

What everything that I note in this section has in common is that we now have staff and compliance procedures in place that were not there a lot of years ago. That costs money, requires a lot of paperwork and takes up a lot of time.

Student success

Where to start? Well, if you work at the college you hear this all the time now, but strangely I don't ever recall hearing it all that much twenty-five years ago. Yes, we would hear information about retention rates and graduation rates and carryover rates, but never really the phrase "student success" and never so repetitively.

In fact, we hear it so much now, an exponential increase in its usage over the last ten years, that maybe it has lost its meaning.

But what does it mean? And how do we measure it? What kind of data are we using? The college does generate a lot of data but has little experience in interpreting that data? Is there too much emphasis on student "success," meaning graduating rather than assuring that the student has actually learned enough? It is unnerving how much this phrase is used, and it is somewhat understandable in terms of accountability to the state.

Along with the “student success’ phrase, we also constantly hear about the need to improve student enrollments and increase student retention. As a faculty member, it is easy to put all of this together and hear an unspoken plea to not scare away students with tough, academically-rigorous courses. As one of my colleagues ably put it,

> “Student success” is just the VCCS’s way of complying with the “graduate more students in a shorter timeframe” mandate. And do it more cheaply.

4. WHAT IS LESS COMPLICATED?

I felt that I should include this category, but I'm not really sure if there is anything that fits in this category. For example, all the forms being online has not simplified anything since many of the forms are difficult to figure out how to fill them out and submit. We all have email access, but that requires the annual online training and constant attention to avoid SPAM and viruses.

The only thing that I could think of with regard to being less complicated is the fact that the college has eliminated a small handful of associate degree specializations and certificate programs as well as removed some courses from the college catalog.[36] But most faculty disagree with the practice of removing courses from the catalog. And, in addition, any bit of simplification there has been more than offset by an increase in the confusion and complication resulting from guaranteed admission transfer agreements, degree and transfer pathways, programs like the George Mason ADVANCE, first-year advising, pathway to the baccalaureate advising, counselors' advising, faculty advising, etc. All of which make it very difficult for students to decide on a future academic major and determine which courses to take at the community college.

One thing that is less complicated is direct deposit of payroll. For some reason, regular payroll was direct deposit when I started twenty-five years ago, but if there were any adjustments to pay, such as overload pay, then you had to pick up the check in the business office.

And finally, one last thing that is truly less complicated is not having a printed course schedule that is mailed to all households in our region. Because we did print the schedule in the past, we had to create the schedule so far in advance to meet printing deadlines, that we ended up with a pretty vague schedule with so many TBAs in it. Now we are able to tweak the schedule right up to the start of classes, and even afterwards.

[36] I wanted to make a quick comparison of the college catalog listing of courses in 1997 with the catalog of 2017. Let's look at ENG, HIS and SOC. In the 1996/96 catalog: 52 ENG courses, 37 HIS courses, 14 SOC courses. In the 2018/19 catalog, 48 ENG courses, 42 HIS courses, 12 SOC courses. That's a modest decrease.

5. WHAT ELSE HAS CHANGED AT THE COLLEGE?[37]

General education courses

Our courses at the college used to just be called electives. It was simple. You had required courses, like ENG 111, for a degree like the A.S. Social Sciences, and then you had electives. The choice of electives was pretty broad, and so that allowed faculty to schedule a wide range of courses that could interest students.

For example, the degree requirements in the 1995-96 college catalog[38] indicate that the "social science requirement may be met by courses in economics (ECO), geography (GEO), history (HIS), political science (PLS), psychology (PSY), and sociology (SOC). Where the social science is listed as an elective in a curriculum, you may select from courses in any of these areas." That's pretty straight-forward. The 2001-02 college catalog[39] has the same wording.

But let's now proceed to the 2017-18 college catalog.[40] The elective requirement language is quite different. Looking at the A.S. Social Sciences degree again and the history three-credit course requirement in that degree: "See HIS courses listed under social/behavioral sciences under General Education Electives. HIS 101 or HIS 102 is recommended to meet the Western civilization requirement at many universities." For the social science elective as part of that same degree, the catalog indicates: "See social/behavior science courses listed under General Education Electives. To meet requirements at many universities, students should enroll in at least one U.S. History course and one Western civilization course."

Somewhere in the last fifteen years, someone sometime created a special category of "approved" courses called general education electives that meet the standards of general education, whatever that is (again, defined by someone somewhere).[41] I always thought that all of our courses at the community college were "general education." It is completely unclear to most faculty why some courses are "general education electives" and some are not. Someone decides that, sometime, somewhere.

This change in elective wording for the degrees that we've just looked at in these college catalogs has had the effect of sharply reducing the number of courses that can be used to fill degree requirements, and that, in turn, has had some impact on our course offerings—there are other factors at work such as the increase in college tuition. In other words, we don't offer as many courses that we used to because many courses

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[37] Not sure if this is for the better or for the worse.

[38] https://www.nvcc.edu/catalog/cat95/

[39] https://www.nvcc.edu/catalog/cat2001/

[40] https://www.nvcc.edu/catalog/cat2017/index.html

[41] https://www.nvcc.edu/catalog/cat2018/academics/electives.html

now are not defined as “general education electives.” I would also be tempted to argue that this restriction on course offerings has had some adverse effect on student success because courses that may have interested students are no being longer offered.

The reduction, or “simplification,” of curricular requirements as we’ve reduced course offerings at the college, has deprived students of elective choices, and it may also be a contributing factor to faculty burnout and/or morale/enthusiasm issues. Most of our faculty have advanced degrees[42] and have real expertise in their academic fields, yet they are increasingly deprived of sharing that advanced knowledge with students in elective courses.

STEM[43]

In the last five years we have heard greater talk of STEM courses, STEM degrees, the importance of STEM, and a lot less talk of the humanities or social sciences. This is kind of interesting when you consider the fact that every year our students have greater and greater difficulties with our math courses. I am not sure how much the emphasis on STEM has changed the proportions of students earning STEM v. non-STEM degrees.

I was curious if there had been any changes in A.S. or A.A. degree requirements that indicated a downplaying of humanities and social science courses and an increase in STEM courses.

The 1995/96 catalog A.S. degree required 65 total credits: 9 credits written and oral communication, 3 credits humanities, 9 credits social sciences, 3 credits general elective for a total of 24 credits. That’s kind of surprising.[44]

I looked at the current business administration A.S. which requires 61 credits of which 21 credits are from courses offered by disciplines in the humanities division. That’s pretty similar to the Information Technology A.S. degree which has 24 credits. So, no STEM courses have not displaced humanities and social science courses in the curriculum.

Historians at the college—those who have been here long enough and can remember—are still a bit peeved about the reduction in specific HIS credits required for an associate degree from 6 to 3 credits, which has affected overall HIS course offerings.

Workforce development

This was once called “continuing education” at the college, and each campus directed its own continuing education curriculum. Now we have a centrally-directed, “workforce

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[42] According to the college Fact Book, in 2017-18, https://www.nvcc.edu/oir/_files/factbooks2013-2018.pdf, 35.6% of faculty held a doctorate degree, 60% a master’s degree. (A minimum of a master’s degree is required to teach most college transfer courses.)

[43] Science, Technology, Engineering Math

[44] https://www.nvcc.edu/catalog/cat95/instruct/degree.htm

development" curriculum which is heavily weighted towards health and technology certifications, especially in areas such as cyber security and medical assistants. One of my colleagues noted about the current state of our workforce offerings**: "**One thing that appears lost is that workforce seems to be more about getting people to take classes in order to advance in the job market, as opposed to taking courses for personal advancement." That is similar to what I've already pointed out has occurred at the college with regard to elective courses and pathways.

I looked for some data on workforce enrollment at the college and found:[45]
1997-98: 27,660 total enrollments with 39,532 total community education units awarded
2016-17: 20,263 total enrollments with 61,125 total community education units awarded

So, enrollments have dropped over the years, and that is not good since income from these workforce courses does contribute to the college's budget. I've been told that one contributing factor to that decline is that pay for workforce instructors has decreased considerably, thus reducing the incentive for highly-qualified individuals to offer courses through our workforce program.

And a final thought from someone who used to teach quite regularly for workforce and is less-inclined to do so now. One of the main issues hampering our workforce program is "a communication problem." Management is just not clear about communicating program goals and objectives to instructors. I would add that this this is not just a workforce problem, it's a college problem.

Reputation
One change that I would say belongs in the plus category is that community colleges, in general, and NOVA, in particular, have much broader public recognition and a better reputation as being a good option for a wide variety of students, particularly as an affordable alternative to the first two years of college. It is no longer the stigma, "Oh, you just go to Nova!" And we have a first-rate sports program now with some of our teams winning championships!

Morale and collegiality
When I ask faculty, who have been at the college for fifteen, twenty, twenty-five or even more years, about changes at the college, just about everyone mentions less informal collegiality and a decline in morale.

But how do you measure faculty and staff morale? Surveys are one option, but for some reason, whenever a survey is distributed at the college, those results are rarely made public, and who knows how many responses there actually are to the survey. Attendance at required meetings and gatherings, especially the collegewide ones like the convocation in August, the pedagogy conference in January, commencement, discipline group meetings, is clearly worse as faculty/staff see no real point in attending.

[45] https://www.nvcc.edu/oir/_files/fb02thecollegeAAA.pdf and https://www.nvcc.edu/oir/_files/factbooks2013-2018.pdf

There are some specific factors that have promoted the decrease in collegiality. For example, faculty are now located in more buildings, which I've already mentioned, and as our class schedule has expanded, faculty are not as concentrated mainly in the morning hours. There is also a lot more committee work at the college that pulls faculty from their offices. All of this leaves less time for informal interaction, and especially a lot less cross-disciplinary talk.

Faculty complain that they are just too busy. Whether that is true or not, I'm not sure. If morale was higher, maybe they wouldn't claim to be so busy.

Across the six campuses of the college, it has become more difficult to establish great working relationships and to create a sense of a collegewide community. On one hand, there are just so many more faculty and staff at the college, and that makes it a bit more difficult to establish close relationships with a lot of people. And on the other hand, faculty and staff are so consumed by their own paperwork demands and by campus time demands, that there is less a sense of collegewide community.

The sense of community we had on our campus and at the college has waned over the past twenty years, and I think that I've pointed to some of the reasons as to why that has occurred.

6. THE ONE THING THAT WE CLEARLY SEEM TO HAVE LESS OF IS MONEY FROM THE STATE.

There are many published articles that focus on the defunding of higher education across the country and in Virginia and the accompanying rise in tuition. This reduction in state support does have academic impacts.[46]

Since I don't work with budgets much as a faculty member, it is really confusing to sort through the college's published budget figures and determine the actual level of state support. This is further complicated by the fact that state appropriations pass through the hands of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and the VCCS first. And since we basically have no local funding sources, that creates a pretty great dichotomy between what the state allocates and the regions' needs.

If we take a look in the NOVA Fact Book,[47] then we find

2000-01
Total operating funds = $125.787 million
Tuition and fees 42.879 (34.09%)
State and federal government 65.253 (51.88%)
local government, rants contracts and gifts, misc. sources = balance (14.03%)

2016/17
Total operating funds = $319.4 million
Tuition and fees 139.058 (43.5%)
State and local appropriations 88.025 (27.6)
Sponsored programs, auxiliary, miscellaneous sources = balance (29%)
That's a pretty sizeable drop in the state portion of our operating income.

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[46] See, for example, Thomas G. Mortenson, State Funding: A Race to the Bottom; Jeffrey J. Selingo, States' decision to reduce support for higher education comes at a cost; Michael B. Sauter, **Error! Main Document Only.**States Investing the Most in Higher Education States Investing the Most in Higher Education

[47] Table 3.4 Operating Funds Income

CONCLUSIONS

So, what do all of these changes mean for the college? What do all of these changes mean for the future of the college? Why does teaching today seem so different than twenty-five years ago?

One thing that has always puzzled me is the relationship between population growth in Northern Virginia and the growth/expansion of NOVA. Yes, in the past twenty-five years the region's population has increased substantially, and I've shown that the college's student headcount has also increased by about 25% in that time, but there is still a nagging feeling that the college's growth has not really kept pace with the overall growth in the region. I might also ask, more specifically, about what the college has done with respect to the college age population in Northern Virginia. For example, of the 18-24 age cohort in the region, have we increased or decreased the percentage that attends NOVA? That would take a lot more research, and I am not sure that we have that data available, but those figures would give us some important information about the penetration of NOVA in the local and state college market.

I originally was going to call this paper/analysis, "the corporatization of higher education" because it seems to me that the college has begun more and more to resemble a bureaucracy and/or a corporation, especially because of the importance in the corporate world of being profitable. (I think that now I might call it "the depersonalization of higher education," more on that below.) As a sprawling bureaucracy, we have far more paperwork, processes and administrators at the college than twenty-five years ago. And at times, all of that paperwork seems to cloud the primary objective of the community college, which is to educate the community. Far too few times the conversation at the college is not focused on actual teaching and teaching challenges but instead on paperwork processes and requirements. That is so much different than two decades ago. But in a way we are not corporatized, and the way that I mean is that we don't really use much data or data analysis to improve our focus and processes. We can watch general enrollment numbers, but we don't do much about analyzing the specifics of those numbers to improve enrollment. We also are not really corporate in that it is not easy to get rid of people at the college. Very rarely at the college has someone left unwillingly.

Something that I have not really mentioned so far is that NOVA is one of twenty-three community colleges in a state system, the VCCS. As such, it is subject to policies that come from VCCS headquarters in Richmond and that are applied to the entire system, for example the purchase of a student information system (SIS) or a course content management system (Canvas). Those kinds of actions are done statewide and usually do not necessarily fit the specific situation of NOVA (or even other individual colleges). Then, of course, there is always the issue of dividing-up the money that has been allocated by the state to the VCCS between the twenty-three colleges in the system.

Because the college is part of a state system, and not locally funded, and because the college lacks really strong local political and economic ties, the college is subject to larger political objectives that are determined politically in the state's general assembly.

Often, it is political motivations, expressed in budgetary terms, that "override any authentic academic interests that an institution of higher learning should cherish."

For example, I've shown the dramatic increase in tuition that has taken place at NOVA in the last twenty-five years. Much of that is the result of a deliberate decision taken by the general assembly to increase the share born by students in their higher education. If at one time, the ratio was state 67% and student 33% of cost, then that's been reversed, and it is now something like student 67% and state 33% (only an approximate guess). That's something that has swept public higher education throughout the United States. Politicians are just unwilling to actually fund higher education while still claiming to be education friendly.

Years ago, we always used to hear the statistic from our college administration on how much the state paid for each student that we had enrolled. We would be told that Virginia ranked something like forty-fifth in the nation in per capita spending on higher education students (and that was before tuition began to skyrocket upwards). Politicians continued to affirm their support for higher education and the state's universities while continuing to dramatically underfund them. Now we often hear the phrase "publicly-supported" college instead of publicly-funded college to reflect the realities of the diminishing share of the state's support in the college's budget.[48]

I'd like to mention here the changes in the out-sourcing and centralization of services at the college. At one time we took care of everything in the division office or at our campus. Now the grounds and maintenance are handled from a central location, as is the campus police force. It is kind of the same with financial aid, and who really knows how the business office works anymore. Other centralizing tendencies include the creation of a central records office that handles student transcripts, course substitution requests and academic program changes. In theory these processes can be done more efficiently because of the use of online forms, but in reality, these are often more complicated because of the poor design of those forms. Other things, like travel approval and reimbursement, are now done statewide.

All of these changes have served to move operational control away from the campus and served to make the campus less a functional unit, less a community. Now it's just a business. Twenty-five years ago, I knew the security personnel, I knew the maintenance men and the groundskeepers, the ladies in the bookstore, staff in the testing center, and the counselors. Now, that is no longer the case.

As in any organization, there is the ten percent who really can be relied on to do just about all the work. Maybe there is another ten percent who can do some work. It's the same deal at the college, but one of the bothersome things is that the college has never figured out a way to reward those who really are doing the work.

[48] Use of that phrase has become especially prominent with our four-year universities, such as the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, etc.

One of my colleagues, who has been at the college a bit longer than I, wrote about how the college does feel different now:

> I remember when I was staff at the Loudoun Campus. There would be a yearly Ice Cream Social and even a couple of times when there was a yearly softball game between faculty/staff versus the students. Has the college (and campuses) grown so large, numerous and even so disparate that such activities are archaic? I felt I was part of a community back then. I don't feel that way now…But when I walk onto the Loudoun Campus as either an adjunct professor or workforce development instructor, I still don't feel as if I'm part of the NOVA Community. I'm just an employee.

As I worked on finishing up this paper, I became increasingly unsure of what to do with it as the "short essay of reflections" about my teaching at NOVA has come out far longer than I originally thought. That's a result of the research that I added to try to explain some of the changes at the college. Some of what I've written about here is pretty much universal to almost all community colleges across the country, for example, Title IX reporting requirements or decreasing state funding for public higher education; while other issues that I described are unique to our multi-campus college here in Northern Virginia. Overall, these changes in the past twenty-five years have been both positive and negative.

I've subtitled my paper "the corporatization of higher education" because of what I view as the increasing bureaucratization of the college, similar to that of any large corporation. I also thought of subtitling this paper the "depersonalization of higher education. Let me see if I can give some explanation of what I mean by that.

At one time, much of the work at the college took place based on personal relationships—as opposed to the current focus on complicated formal processes, procedures.[49] There was a time when I knew everyone in the counseling office along with the expertise of each counselor, and as a result I could send a student to the appropriate person. The counselors also all knew exactly which courses I taught and how I taught those courses, and so they could find the best fit for a student looking for a history class. Now, I've no idea who is in the counseling center, and you can't even find that information on the website. Send an email to "locounseling" and hope for the best. I also once knew everyone in the registrar's office and student services and to whom I should direct a student. Now, it's just a guess. Send an email to "loreg" and hope for the best. Counseling, student services, parking, financial aid--these are all now just separate departments of the corporation.

Not that I'm a big fan of the Myers-Briggs test, but I've wondered how front-line administrators, deans, vice presidents, etc., would score on the test. So much at a college, or at any corporation, depends on having the right leadership team in place.

[49] It seems to me that a lot of the paperwork at the college now resembles the fine print of a credit card agreement; something that no one reads but that everyone has to agree to the provisions because what choice do you really have to modify anything if you want to use that credit card.

So, let's talk some football. The college's administration, or any corporation's administration, so much resembles a football team, and we know that if you don't have a great head coach, or good position coaches, your team is going to suck or maybe, at best, get by as mediocre. I think that it is the same deal with colleges and the football coach analogy applies to our college. It doesn't matter how great the athletes, or the faculty, if the coaching staff is not able to get the best out of the athletes, or the faculty and staff, mediocrity beckons.

The more that I think about it, the more that I am struck by the accuracy of my reference to football. And you might have some great individual coaches, for example, an offensive line coach, or a dean of language, arts, and social sciences, but the team as a whole might still be terrible—I tried not to keep using the "mediocre" term over and over again. And then there is the support staff. For a football organization to prosper that means that there are all sorts of staff that have to do well and contribute to the team's success: business operations, ticketing, player personnel, contracts, medical, strength, parking, legal, etc. It is the exact same deal at the college (financial aid, parking, registrar, counseling, etc.) with all absolutely crucial to the success of the college, but it all starts and ends with leadership, not only at the top, but throughout the organization.